

First Words

A First Steps Communications Tool for Families From Family to Family

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Alphabet Soup

Each month we will cover a few abbreviations or acronyms parents might hear while in First Steps. Sometimes it is awkward for families to ask. Do you know these?

- **NE = Natural Environments**

The typical activities a child and family experience on a regular basis, and the places where the child and family spend time each week.

- **IDEA = Individuals With Disabilities Education Act**

The federal legislation that guarantees the rights of children with disabilities to full participation in the public school system.

The Transdisciplinary Approach to Early Intervention

All across the country, state early intervention programs offer a variety of services to children and families who meet the state’s eligibility guidelines. States have some flexibility in the design of their programs for families. In Indiana, First Steps providers function as part of what could be termed an “interdisciplinary” team. Members of an interdisciplinary team typically assess and treat a child independent of other team members. Periodically the team meets together to discuss progress and develop a service plan for that child. Though team members do share ideas and information, for the most part, each provider is only responsible for the part of the service plan that relates to his or her area of expertise.

Another approach to early intervention is a “transdisciplinary” team. The transdisciplinary approach aims to go beyond the roles of individual disciplines (i.e. PT, OT, Speech, etc.) in order to form a team that maximizes communication, interaction, and cooperation among its members. While the team consists of specialists from all disciplines where the child has needs, there is one primary service provider who works with the child and family on a regular basis. This primary service provider can be an Occupational,

Physical or Speech Therapist, or a Social Worker, Nurse or Special Educator/Developmental Therapist. The primary service provider would have the experience, skills and knowledge necessary to help a child in all areas of growth and development. All team members share responsibility for the development of the IFSP, and all decisions regarding the plan are made by consensus. However, the plan is carried out on a daily basis by only the family and the primary service provider. In this way, the primary service provider can get to know the child and family well and can better monitor needs and changes as they arise.

Another unique feature of the transdisciplinary approach is that the team “coaches” families to aid in the child’s success. The primary service provider gives ideas and activities that can be done every day with the child—even when the provider isn’t there. These suggestions are things the family can easily integrate into their daily lives. For instance, if a feeding issue is being addressed, the primary service provider will offer things that can be done during every meal with the child.

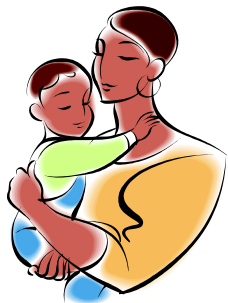
One of the greatest benefits of this approach is the

development of strong, supportive relationships between families and providers, and among the providers themselves. Another advantage for families is that there are fewer people in and out of the house each week, which can be a stressful experience for some families.

The transdisciplinary team members are interdependent, and therefore, must be committed to assisting and supporting one another, especially the primary service provider. They must be willing to give up “disciplinary control” and give the time and energy necessary to teach, learn and work across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Above all, they must recognize the family as the most important influence on the child’s life and include them as equal team members as decisions are made about the child’s service plan.

If you have access to the internet, do a search for “transdisciplinary approach in early intervention” to find much more information on this subject. If you are interested in considering this approach for your family, contact your service coordinator to schedule a meeting to discuss this option with your IFSP team.

Did You Know.....



There is money available to assist family members who wish to participate in disability related conferences or trainings. In many instances, these events have registration fees and other expenses (lodging, food, mileage, child care) which can reach into the hundreds of dollars. The Family Involvement Fund may be accessed by family members (this includes parents, foster parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) to help offset these expenses.

The FIF is funded by a collaborative effort between the Family and Social Services Administration, Bureau of Child Development, and the Indiana Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners through the Unified Training System. The Fund is administered by IN*SOURCE (Indiana Resource Center for Families with Special Needs). More information can be found at their website -- www.insource.org.

A limit of \$300 per person or \$600 per family, per year is available. Keep in mind,

there are times when not all requests can be funded, so the Family Involvement Fund has a priority system for reimbursement. Priority #1 is any Unified Training System event. Priority #2 are first time users of the fund (with highest priority to those families with children with disabilities ages 6 years and younger). Priority #3 is if attendance would enhance ethnic or cultural diversity and finally, priority # 4 is simply first come, first served. Priority is also given to events held within the state of Indiana.

How do you apply? Complete a Family Involvement Fund application form (available on the IN*SOURCE website -- www.insource.org) and mail or fax it to IN*SOURCE, 809 N. Michigan St., South Bend, IN 46601-1036, fax (574) 234-7279. Applications must be received at least 30 days prior to the event. You must pay the expenses initially and then turn in receipts for reimbursement after the event. If a conference or training interests you, consider taking advantage of the Family Involvement Fund!

Advocacy Tip of the Month

Plan Ahead, Three is Just Around the Corner!

The choices for support and services are different when a child turns 3. Public and private preschools, Head Start programs, local library programs, park and recreation, gymnastic, music and dance programs designed for young children are just a few of the many options. Talk with your current First Steps providers and to other parents of young children to discover what is available for 3 and 4 years olds. Start early (when your child is 1 or 1 ½ is not too early) to get to know what is available in your community. This will give you time to visit the programs. To help during your visits, check out the "Parent Observation Guidelines" and "Family Transition Checklist" at http://www.IN.gov/fssa/first_step/trans.

Resources for Families and Providers

[Check out these web resources on transdisciplinary approach to early intervention:](#)

Eric Digests

http://www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed313867.html

Connecticut Birth to Three

<http://www.birthe23.org/Publications/2003manual/TRANSDIS.DOC>

University of Delaware

<http://www.udel.edu/bateman/acei/inclusivefall03.htm>

[Use this link to print your application for the Family Involvement Fund.](#)

In*Source

<http://www.insource.org/FIFInsFm.pdf>

For more information about Family to Family, visit our web page at http://www.in.gov/fssa/first_step/f2f/index.html
Or contact Mary Jo Paladino at 574-273-6019 or mpaladin@indiana.edu